



DECOR TOURS  
*Provence*

# PROVENCE DISPATCH

*No. 3: Communication*

We have one absolutely necessary app you'll need while in Provence together, but we're also including several other useful apps, plus some general info on getting along successful while in France.

## *Our Must-Have App*

You will need to download WhatsApp to your phone and be comfortable using it, as this will be our primary form of group communication in Provence.

WhatsApp is a chat service, like you already have as a feature on your phone, but it allows us to seamlessly share texts, voice messages, high-res photos, documents (such as our schedule while in Provence), and more. Because it is platform-agnostic, all communication is easily accessible



by everyone in the group, whether you have an iPhone or an Android. Plus, many businesses in Europe use WhatsApp as a means of customer communication. Trust us, it makes scoring a reservation or booking a service much easier than trying to get through with a call!

### **How to get started with WhatsApp**

WhatsApp is available for both Android and iPhone; you can find it on the Google Play Store or Apple App Store. The system requirements are Android 4.1 or newer or iOS 12 or newer, so compatibility shouldn't be a problem. The only requirement is an active cellular plan, as registration is based on your cell phone number.

Setting up WhatsApp is very straightforward. When you open the app for the first time, you'll be guided through a few set-up steps. Enter your mobile phone number when prompted, and this becomes your WhatsApp "address" and account ID. An SMS message will be sent to confirm that you actually own the number in question.

If you're using an Android phone, WhatsApp will pick up this SMS message automatically in most cases and carry on with the registration process. Registering WhatsApp on an iPhone may require you to manually punch in the

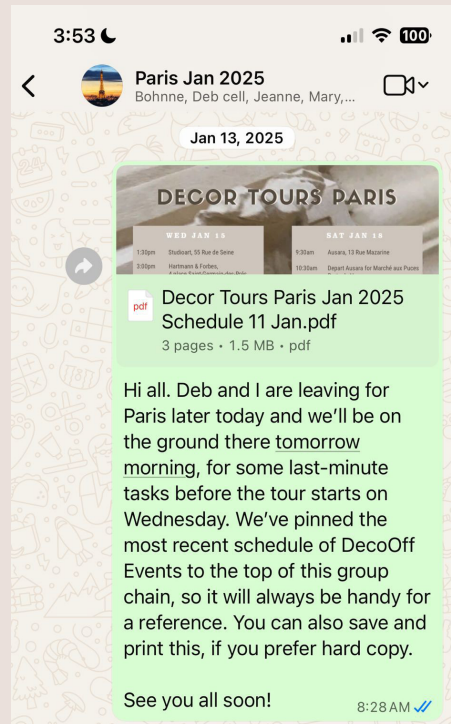
six-digit code, or at least tap on the autofill code above your keyboard, much like how SMS two-factor authentication works in other apps.

Once your phone number has been registered, there are a couple more prompts including permission to access your contacts and photos—both completely optional—after which you'll be ready to go.

Look for Deb Barrett at 630 207 0357 and Susan Schultz at 212 352 9968. Send us a message asking to be added to the Provence Jan 2026 group and we'll send you a confirmation. That's it for now...but the sooner you sign up, the sooner you'll start receiving additional info on Provence.

### WhatsApp on your computer

You can get WhatsApp on your Mac or Windows PC, but while the Mac version works for lap/desktops, iPads and Apple Watch, the Android version is lap/desktop only. For Androids, it's important to note that this isn't a stand-



alone app. Instead, it's a companion to WhatsApp on your Android phone.

To use WhatsApp on another device, you'll need to link your computer with WhatsApp using your phone. The first time you open WhatsApp Desktop, you'll be shown instructions on how to do this, including a QR code you can scan from WhatsApp on your phone. If you're bringing a laptop or Apple tablet, this is sometimes an easier way to catch up on and respond to group messages once we're all back in our hotel rooms!

**IMPORTANT!** You *must* have WhatsApp active and be part of the Provence Sept 2026 group in order to participate in all

Decor Tours group events. Link for [iPhone](#), and [Android](#), and for [Apple lap/desktop](#) and [PC lap/desktop](#).

# *Good to Have*

A mix of apps we find helpful.



## In General

Download the app for your airline(s). It's often hard to hear gate change, delays, and other announcements in busy airports.

Also download the apps for your credit cards and bank(s). If something goes wrong with your credit or debit cards, or if they get lost or stolen, these apps can provide immediate info, cancellation, re-issue of a new card and, in some cases, issue a digital card for immediate use.

## Google Maps

### [iPhone](#) [Android](#)

If we need to meet up after the group splits up at the market(s) or in other circumstances, we can drop a pin and let you know where to find us!

## SCNF Connect

### [iPhone](#) [Android](#)

This is the official app of the French National Rail Service that lets you plan routes, buy tickets directly, check to see if there are any delays/disruptions on your routes, etc.

## Dining

There will be a few days where you'll be on your own for lunch, specifically Sunday in Isle sur la Sorgue, and

Wednesday in St-Rémy-de-Provence. If you want to make sure you get a sit-down lunch on either day, we recommend making reservations. These are very popular market days in both cities, and tables will fill up fast, especially in Isle sur la Sorgue if you want canal-side, or outdoor dining.

We suggest downloading both The Fork and the Michelin Guide. Many French restaurants use The Fork to manage their bookings, vs. Resy or similar apps in the U.S. And the Michelin Guide, although it's a bit clunky to use, can help steer you away from not-great to good/better/best options, based on your location and budget.

## The Fork

### [iPhone](#) [Android](#)

## Michelin Guide

### [iPhone](#) [Android](#)

And, if you've heard about how various regions, sectors, etc. of France are often on strike—you heard right. For updated information check [C'est la Greve](#). There's no app, but you can follow on FB, IG, LinkedIn, etc.

While in France, we recommend:

France 24, a French news station in English. [Available online](#) or as apps. [iPhone](#) [Android](#)

# You're in France

It might seem obvious but in France, things are done the French way. It's not America, so don't expect it to be in terms of services, space, communication, food, etc.

France has been so often portrayed—and idealized—that many first-time visitors can find themselves shocked by the ways French behavior and attitudes differ from how they imagined. In particular, a casual approach to interactions should be set aside while in France for a more mannered, discreet behavior. In almost all ways, the French are more measured, with more formalized social rules. Understand these differences to get the most out of your trip.

## Three Little Words

You've probably heard this before, but it bears repeating. The social norm in France is simple: You greet people each and every time before saying anything else. This is the case for social interactions, in professional settings, and with those in

a service role. *Always begin with a “**Bonjour** madame/ monsieur.”* This applies for whether you're taking a seat at a café, entering a boutique, or stepping into a bakery—greeting the person you're interacting with is a baseline for polite exchange in France. Skipping it can be seen as abrupt or even rude, no matter how friendly your tone is after. Only after you greet the person should you ask your question, place your order, etc.

The magic word in France really is **bonjour** (or **bonsoir** in the evening). And, if you can, throw in a **au revoir** (goodbye) as you leave!

You can probably guess the other two words, **s'il vous plait** (and yes, in French that's more than one word!) and **merci**, because please and thank you are always welcome. Do your best to use at least these few words, even if you are self-conscious. Remember: You're in France. Trying to do things the French way will ultimately be easier, regardless of your accent!



## Speak softly

The next best advice we can give: keep your voice down. The French value discretion. Loud conversations stand out—and not in a good way. In restaurants, on the train, in line, in shops, etc. for most of us the volume should be our “indoor voices” then go even a bit quieter. Keep this mind if you’re on your own, with just a single companion, or if we’re together as an entire group. That “big energy” that Americans see as cheerful, friendly, and fun, comes across in France as boisterous and rude.

## Dining & Restaurants

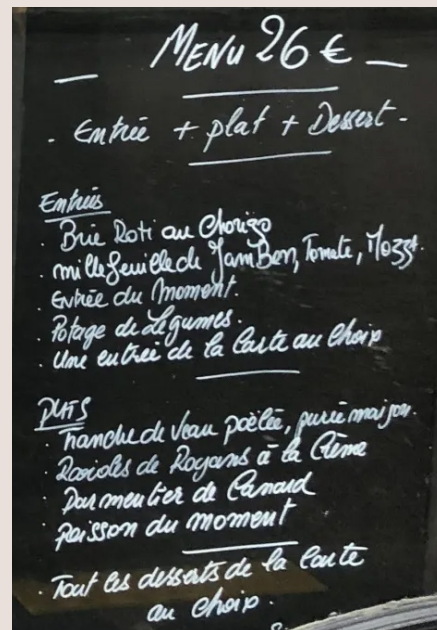
In France, dining is an experience, not a quick transaction and French meal culture has its own rhythm and codes. Before you sit down, whether inside or out, you must first ask about a table. Empty tables do not equal available tables. Even in casual bistros, there's an expected structure: you're greeted and seated (never seat yourself), handed menus at the appropriate time, and only addressed by the server when they're ready—not when you are.

Once you have reviewed *la carte* (which is what English-speakers refer to as the menu), you may see or ask if there is a *plat du jour* (dish of the day). Specials, including a three-course *prix fixe*, are usually shown on chalkboard on

the walls, or sometime printed as additional pages to the menu. To order *à la carte*, is to choose individual dishes from the menu.

The *prix fixe* menu is usually a great option. You get the best the chef has to offer for that day, the freshest products from the market, and generally at a lower cost than ordering *à la carte*.

Finally, let go of your food fears. You will not be able to order like you do at home—can I swap this for that; could I have this without the peas; I'll just have the salad; etc. *Certainement pas*, certainly not! A French chef's menu is not a suggestion, and substitutions are rarely allowed unless it's for an allergy. Embrace this key aspect of French culture and try what is offered.





### A few other dining tips

- You often won't find salt and pepper automatically on your table, because the food is already seasoned appropriately by the chef. Try your food first before asking for these. And be prepared for some judgment if you do!
- And, for a country known for its baguettes, there's a lot to understand in regards to bread at a meal. You often will not receive bread in advance of your meal, but if you do, it is not meant as an appetizer. The bread is used to push your salad onto your fork, or soak up the *délicieuse sauce* your *plat* came bathed in. It's perfectly acceptable to break the bread with your hands, and to place it on the rim of your plate if you don't have a bread plate. Also, you probably won't receive butter with your bread...

"For the first few times I traveled to France, I asked for butter with bread at dinner," said Susan. "I didn't understand the minute sighs, lifted eyebrows, and other indications that what I was asking for was not part of the French code. Finally, one time a waiter explained, "This is not breakfast time, madame."

- Sharing one main during prime meal times, is frowned on. Keep in mind, portions are much smaller than in the U.S.
- Coffee (or tea) will be served to close the meal, after dessert. Never with the dessert. Note: Like butter with your bread after breakfast time, ordering a milky coffee after lunch or dinner was considered a *faux pas*, but the French seemed to have resigned themselves to this by now!
- There are no "to-go" boxes.
- Do not rearrange chairs, tables, etc. without asking.

- Do not ask for a split check. It's your and your dining companions' responsibility to decide who owes what. If you tell the waiter to charge €XX.XX on one card and €XX.XX on another, that's doable. Or get one of the many restaurant bill splitting apps, such as Tab, Splitty, etc.
- Waiters won't hover, refill your glass unprompted, or rush you out the door. You need to take the initiative—if you want the menu, more water, or the check, politely signal your server by catching their eye.
- Don't be offended if your waiters don't smile or engage with you constantly; their focus is on efficiency, not emotional cheer. Waiters in France are paid a living wage and do not need tips to make up income, as such they handle many more tables than we are used to in the U.S. It's a different approach, yes, but you are in France and it's the French way!

All this said, don't be intimidated. The notes above are meant to make you aware of the differing expectations between American first-time visitors and French restaurant staff. And, restaurants are offering more options than ever—more vegan options, more alternative milk options, more dietary options, etc. It's truly rewarding to explore France through its food!



# French Language Basics



Learning the basics of any language is always a good idea, but it's particularly helpful in France, where *politenesse* is part of the social contract.

## Translation

Everyone needs some help deciphering something—a menu, a sign, etc. And, when you want to very specific about an allergy, request, address confirmation, etc, these apps are life-savers!

Google Translate

[iPhone](#) [Android](#)

DeepL

[iPhone](#) [Android](#)

## The very basics

Oui = Yes (wee)

Non = No (nahn)

Bonjour = hello/good day (bohn-zhoor)

Merci = thank you (mairh-see)

S'il vous plaît = Please (seal voo pleh)

Bonne journée = Have a good day (bun zhoornay)

Bonsoir = good evening (bohn-swahr)

## At a restaurant

Vous avez = Do you have... (vooz-ahvay)

un table pour = a table for ... (ahn tablah poor)

J'ai = I have (zhay)

une réservation pour = a reservation for (uhn rezervation poor)

Je suis allergique à = I am allergic to (Juh swees allerjeek ah)

Je voudrais ceci/cette = I would like this/that (Juh voodray sahsee/set)

l'addition = the check (lahdishion)

Une carafe d'eau = a carafe of water (unh carafe dough)

Un verre de = a glass of = (ahn vair duh)

Un menu en anglais = a menu in English (unh meh-noo ahn ahn-glay) menu. To order *à la carte*, is to choose individual dishes from the menu.

## Coffee descriptions

café filtre or café américain = drip coffee

café allongé = espresso with additional water

cafetière = French press

## Basic questions

Parlez-vous anglais = Do you speak English (Parlay vousanglay)

Où est = where is (ooh ay)

Qu'est-ce que = what is (quess kah)

Puis-je = may I (pwee juh)

Combien ça coûte? = How much is this? (comb be ahn sah coot)

Peux-tu l'écrire? = Can you write it? (Puh too lucreair)

Pourrais-je essayer? = Could I try (Pooray zhahsayyeah)

## At a shop

Je regarde juste = I'm just looking (juh regardah juist)

Vous avez cette taille... = Do you have in size... (voozahvay set tiey...)

Petite, Moyenne, Grande = Small, Medium, Large (puhteat, moyenne, graahnd)

Dans une autre couleur = in another color (dahns uhn ohtrah coolair)

Je vais prendre ça = I'll take this (Juh vay prandrah sah)

J'aimerais = I would like (zhemeray)

Un peu de ça = some of this (uhn pouh duh sah)

Je suis désolé = I am sorry (Juh swee dess olay)

Je ne comprends pas = I don't understand (Juh nuh com-prond pah)

## Politeness

Pardon = Sorry (paredohn) or je suis navré (juh swee navray)

Excusez-moi = excuse me (excuze mwah) or veuillez m'excuser (vohljay mexcuezay)

Je vous en prie = You're welcome (Juh voos ahn pree) or de rien (duh ree-en)

Merci pour votre temps/aide = Thank you for your time/help (mairh-see poor voterah tomp/votread)



# *French Language Apps*

No specific recommendations here because everyone learns differently!

There are dozens of YouTube videos, Facebook groups, Instagram lessons, Spotify podcasts, and more you can use to learn with, if that's more your style. And there are now lessons that use AI to assist with your learning. But these are the “big” and some not-so-big names those in previous groups have used.

[Babbel](#)

[DuoLingo](#)

[Pimsleur](#)

[Rosetta Stone](#)

[Mondly](#)

[Rocket Languages](#)

[JumpSpeak](#)

[LingoPie](#)

[BBC](#)

[Busuu](#)

[TV Monde 5](#)

[French Pod](#)

[The French Experiment](#)

[Lawless French](#)

[InnerFrench](#)

[TalkPal](#)

[Promova](#)





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# PROVENCE DISPATCH

*No. 4: La Vie en Rosé*

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